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ABSTRACT

A systematic framework for institutional evaluation and accreditation treats the process as continuous and cyclical, placing emphasis on goals and objectives. A comprehensive statement is made about the process using models and existing literature, and making methodological suggestions for institutions undergoing self-study. Kinds of self-studies and organization for making them are discussed. (MSE)

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Topical Paper No. 9

# INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION FOR ACCREDITATION

ED148190

Joseph J. Semrow

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June, 1977

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# INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION FOR ACCREDITATION

by

**Joseph J. Semrow**
*Executive Director*
**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education**
**North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools**

Higher Education Program
College of Education
University of Arizona

Topical Paper No. 9

June, 1977

# INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION FOR ACCREDITATION

> *The purpose of the Association shall be the development and maintenance of high standards of excellence for universities, colleges and schools, the continued improvement of the educational program and the effectiveness of instruction on school and college levels through a scientific and professional approach to the solution of educational problems . . . .*
>
> ("Bylaws," p. 248)

Concern for the quality of education in postsecondary institutions and their related units and subdivisions by the community of institutions and the general public generates the need to state as clearly as possible the means by which institutions are accredited and maintain their accredited status. The growth in size of institutions, the complexities introduced through the emphasis on research as well as teaching and service and the encumbering relationships to governmental agencies, both federal and state, emphasize that need.

Another factor stimulating the need is the development of new or an increased emphasis on more varied institutional forms of educational enterprises and "educational delivery systems" to serve different populations and clientele heretofore not served (Thrash, p. 280 and Baldi, p. 275), a reorganization of the curriculum and degree programs in many institutions to reflect a different relationship between the liberal arts and professional and career programs, and new means and techniques for viewing and accounting for learning and achievement (McClelland and Magarrell). These forces are having their impact through social changes of various kinds and the press of technological needs in which individuals have created new demands on institutions for flexibility, appropriate course and degree offerings, and suitable credentials.

A third factor is the absence in our social system of a well-developed means of governmental control and supervision of the postsecondary educational enterprise at either the state or federal level. The import of this phenomenon and a review of its impact in various contexts have been provided by Clark, Miles and Millett (see bibliography for citations). Until recently, the limitations and the opportunities of institutions have been to a high degree dominated by the professoriate setting the course for institutional development in a potent combination of medieval and European precedents and ideals, modern American modifications, and the assertion of the professional needs of a teaching and research faculty elite (Granbard). The fact of the matter is that no agency, including accrediting agencies, has assumed, in the regulatory sense, any control

over those important characteristics and attributes which determine the nature, form, and content of the educational enterprise and its relationship to society as a whole, which is evident in most other countries. Current events spearheaded by the reality of economic and political factors appear to be forcing some reconciliation of this situation. The role which may be foreseen for voluntary accreditation in such circumstances depends on the extent to which it is able to maintain order in its own house and retain the confidence and support of the community of institutions and the public in general, including governmental agencies which are responsible to the body politic.

Accreditation arising from a unique set of circumstances in the United States and organized by the institutions themselves can be conceived as a tier in the general governance structure of institutions. An important characteristic of its form is the establishment of the locus of control at the grass-roots level and the decentralized councils representing the community of institutions which form the decision-making structure. It must continue to build on past strengths and rectify present weaknesses to develop and maintain a meaningful "system" of accreditation. In this endeavor it must have the support of the community of institutions.

Rising alongside these forces is an availability of additional tools and resources, which intensify the capabilities for systematic analysis, decision making, and planning within the context of the institution's mission, purposes, and program objectives. Reference here is made to budgeting procedures, decision-making theory, management-information systems, and evolving systematized institutional data bases, and other models of management and administration useful and adaptable to postsecondary institutions (Romine). The incorporation and utilization of these techniques and procedures within the self-study framework will assist in enabling improved decision making and judgments for accreditation. Moreover, the development of more adequate institutional data-base systems for planning and decision making will help to place institutional evaluation, particularly the self-study approach, on a more systematic basis and enable the development of greater congruency between the Commission's accreditation policies and programs and the institution's own planning activities. The decline of the *ad hoc* approach should result in benefits to all concerned. Indeed, it should result in bringing together the efforts within the institution that are directed toward analysis and evaluation for itself and other agencies as well as the preparation the institution needs to make for a North Central evaluation.

Accreditation signifies that an institution is achieving its goals and purposes at a satisfactory level and in an acceptable manner and can be expected to continue to do so. The accreditation decision is a judgment and, as such, is based upon evidence provided to substantiate conclusions that the institution is achieving its

goals and objectives in an acceptable manner at a satisfactory level and can be expected to continue to do so. Judgments rendered, thusly, are based on a process which assumes a methodology rooted in reason, logic, and modes of inquiry which of themselves form the raison d'etre of the higher education and postsecondary enterprise. Decision making for accreditation is thus beyond the mere application of tradition, individual intuitional biases, or the mere application of norms in some prescriptive sense. It is **not** based upon an accumulation of judgments of individuals but upon the accumulation of evidence in relation to conclusions about an institution's performance upon which a collective judgment is rendered.

Accreditation decision making is built upon a two-tiered system which encompasses a peer review process. On the one hand the institution is expected to conduct a study and analysis of its operations in the light of its mission statement, its goals and purposes, and its program objectives. Each institution must in the speculative sense come to some conclusions about where it is in the scheme of things and define what its relationships are to the forces and influences with which it must contend and in the practical sense reconcile them with what it is intending and seeking. In other words such a study of the institution's operations is a synthesis of those scientific and humanistic modes of inquiry which result in the formulation of authoritative opinion about the effectiveness of the educational enterprise. The management sciences provide a basic methodology around which can be organized rationally the institution's efforts and problem-solving techniques (Adams).

On the other hand, the Commission provides for an on-site evaluation review by a team of persons independent and outside the institution. This constitutes the peer review which utilizes as its basis the institution's self-study. This process is carried out both substantively and procedurally under the Guidelines of the Commission (Semrow). The peer review is based upon the concept that individuals schooled in the disciplines and research and acquainted with the organization and processes of postsecondary institutions are able to exercise their competence and expertise and apply their problem-solving ability to fundamental questions concerning institutional effectiveness.

The report of the team includes the official recommendations to the Commission concerning the institution's accredited status. These recommendations then proceed through a multilayered review procedure which encompasses a due-process procedure for the institution.

A brief review of these matters underscores the complexity of the accreditation process. In an earlier and less complicated time, self-study was conceived perhaps originally by the Commission as a unique process for accrediting. As mentioned earlier, disciplinary advances have brought about

additional means for the study of institutions. Thus, while the term self-study connotes a somewhat distinctive process to meet the needs of accreditation today, it can only have meaning in the broad sense and incorporates other analytical and reporting devices relating to planning, management, and evaluation within the context of the management sciences.

The self-study concept has many advantages within the context of the purposes of the Commission. In the first instance it puts reliance on the institution to study itself through its own resources to the extent possible. The approach is flexible and eclectic such that it can incorporate and synthesize elements of other evaluation devices. It enables the development of a methodological process that is flexible in that both objective and subjective measures may be applied where useful and necessary. It enables the Commission to incorporate dynamic values of growth, change, and planning to replace static qualities represented in the utilization of norms, standards, or other purely descriptive, proscriptive, or prescriptive approaches including those of the auditing variety. The self-study enables the Commission to focus on institutional vitality, renewal, and planning.

## Criticisms of Self-Studies

Despite the fact that self-study has been promulgated by the Commission for a long time, the process, in that its direction is evaluative, has not always yielded this result. In a large number of cases self-studies are largely descriptive of the programs, the operations, or the environment of the institution. As such, they repeat or recast material found in catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and other materials. There is an absence of emphasis on evaluation and the extent to which the institution purports to meet its objectives. To a large extent this must be inferred from the material presented, which makes the role of the on-site team much more difficult. Self-studies that are evaluative in nature are the exception rather than the rule. To be sure, institutions need to gather this descriptive material along with other statistics and data about the operations of the institution (see page 14 of this paper). It would be impossible to move to the next stage, that of analysis and evaluation, unless this was accomplished.

Institutional evaluation tends to be spasmodic, if not convulsive, and not continuous. Each time an institution is reviewed for accreditation purposes it must "gear up" *de novo.* The institution usually goes through a spasm of effort to get ready. Such an effort is usually viewed on a one-time basis, and with the passage of the review the self-study is put on the shelf.

The complexity of institutions and the fact that their operations and activities occur at a number of levels indicates that it is rather difficult to

complete a comprehensive self-study in a brief span of time. This would appear to call for delimiting such a task in carefully planned time sequences or phases such that the idea of comprehensiveness would cover a span of years.

Institutions don't relate self-study efforts for accreditation to other types of evaluative or reporting needs in which the institution may be engaged. Usually an institution must respond to many agencies, and there may be considerable overlap of the requirements among them. More fruitful efforts could probably be obtained by systematically relating data gathering, analysis, and evaluation instead of treating each as a discrete and separate effort.

## Criticisms of the Commission

A major problem of the Commission is how to carry out its responsibilities as a voluntary agency, yet, fulfill the responsibilities incumbent upon it. Beginning with the accreditation movement and reemphasized with the establishment of the periodic review program in 1958 the Commission has continually sought to devise a suitable means in two respects. One is the nature of the process by which institutions should be reviewed for purpose of accreditation and maintain their accredited status. This relates to the selection and encouragement of suitable evaluation methodologies which are appropriate to achieve the purposes of the Commission and enable it to fulfill its role as described in its charter.

A second is the designation and development of the content of evaluation: the substance of the evaluation as distinguished from the form and procedure. The development of nontraditional forms has made this problem more salient. In an earlier period the Commission was much more explicit about that content and stated exactly what attributes and in what measure they should characterize the institution of higher education (*Revised Manual*). Obviously, the same situation cannot prevail today. Moreover, a host of other organizations and disciplinary societies exist and are quite active in establishing norms, developing consensus, and setting forth objectives and goals. But while the Commission cannot define or prescribe in detail, the absence of adequate guidelines and criteria leaves the process of accreditation open to many individual biases, methodological confusion, and diminution of trust and confidence on the part of both institutions and the public. The fact of the matter is that we are approaching a state where not only the meaning of an undergraduate degree but that of graduate degrees as well is being questioned. The attempt to maintain quality in institutions through the methods historically in effect in the Commission are being subjected to severe strain in the name of diversity and institutional individualization.

A third area of criticism is the relationship of the Commission to its institutions. While some attention has been given to changes in the Bylaws of the

Association and the Procedures of the Commission, these exist today, in a more complex time, essentially as when the Association was founded. This may speak well in a large number of respects. However, the rapidity of change in institutions and the need to respond to a wider public accountability may underscore the need to establish a closer, more meaningful relationship to institutions than what is available in current programs and procedures.

What is presented in the ensuing pages of this statement are some thoughts about meeting these criticisms. It is asserted that quality education is provided by an institution that sets forth through a planning process 1) adequate and meaningful institutional goals, objectives, and priorities within the context of postsecondary educational institutions, 2) the means to carry them out and maintain them, 3) and can demonstrate, through useful outcome measures in a feedback system to the statement of goals and objectives, that these levels of performance are being achieved or not achieved. The institution utilizes such knowledge to revise where necessary in a continuous planning cycle. This is the essence of the definition of an accreditable institution.

## Strategies for Institutional Self-Study

Institutional self-study may take a variety of forms and utilize a combination of approaches to arrive at a valid and reasonable determination of levels of institutional performance in relation to goals and purposes. Historically, and in contemporary use, are standards and criteria derived from authoritative sources; norms based upon surveys of institutional data and practices; self-study and peer evaluation approaches based upon critical and introspective analysis of the institution's operations and functions in relation to goals and objectives; and various types of program, budgeting, and auditing reviews within or beyond the planning context.

Forms of evaluation and their anticipated outcomes may also depend upon the growth and development stage of the institution and the sophistication of the information and data base available, in place and functioning at the institution. Newly-founded or nonaccredited institutions may, in the first instance, write a planning proposal outlining the institution's developmental status. Following this, institutions may complete comprehensive planning and development studies in which standards, norms, and other determinations of prevailing best practices play a significant role. As the institution matures and develops considerable sophistication, it may begin to collect and build the data and information bases upon which to evaluate past and current performance and to project and develop hypotheses for future planning.

Further, forms of institutional evaluation may vary according to the situational context in which the institution finds itself. For the evaluation to be

most productive and beneficial, the institution may want to study the implications of an historical record of accomplishment reviewed in the light of emerging concerns, or shifts, or changes at the postsecondary level affecting the institution internally or externally, or the volatility of certain variables, either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, which are affecting institutional development.

To be effective the self-study approach puts heavy reliance on the analytical-methodological approach in assessing quality of the institution's operations. The analytic approach to institutional evaluation is similar and finds its basis in the "inquiry" approach, the basic methodology of all scholarly and investigative research and discipline. Its basic elements utilizing the institution and its sub-parts as a focus are the following: 1) the selection of a subject or subjects for investigation; 2) the collection of probable sources of information; 3) the examination of these sources for genuineness, relevance, and accuracy; 4) the extraction of credible particulars from the sources; and, 5) the synthesis of the particulars thus derived (Gottschalk, p. 52).

Recent formulations for the analysis of the effectiveness of organizations and institutional evaluation enable the application of additional techniques to an exploration for the utilization of more appropriate and suitable methodologies. The search is required by the necessity to orient the process of institutional self-study to an evaluation of institutional performance of its related units or subdivisions in the light of goals, purposes, and objectives as they relate to educational outcomes.[1]

Conceived in this fashion the institutional self-study for evaluation and accreditation should proceed from a set of purposes and be the result of some well-formulated plans. The following chart depicts the elements which need to be provided for in an overall comprehensive design.

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[1] A number of helpful sources are now available to institutions. Among them are the cost analysis and outcome evaluation models from the National Center for Higher Education Management Service (NCHEMS) at Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE); materials which may be available from the Advanced Institutions Development Program at the United States Office of Education (USOE); materials which are available from the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO); materials which may be available from the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges and the American Management Association. The volume, *A Comprehensive Approach to Institutional Development*, in the Jossey-Bass Series, New Directions for Higher Education, No. 15 (1976), Shoemaker and Berquist (eds.), largely sets forth the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC) program. The Educational Testing Service at Princeton, New Jersey, has developed a self-study program which includes several instruments and questionnaires. All of these models or programs are helpful in some respects. It would be useful for the institution to familiarize itself with these resources to help set its own course and direction.

## EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DECISION-MAKING DESIGN

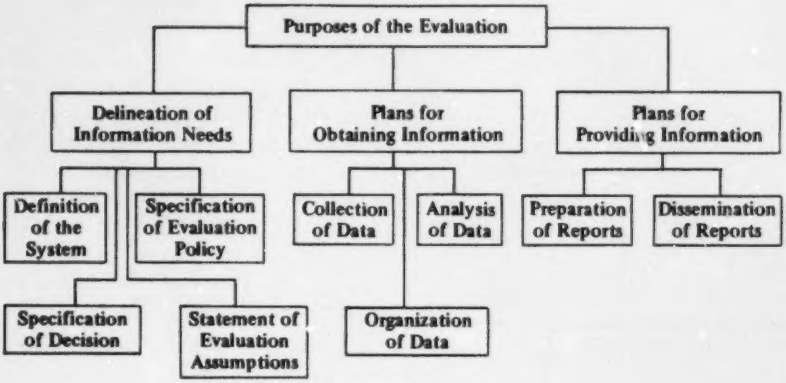


**FIGURE I (Stufflebeam)**

The necessity for developing a set of purposes and plans for institutional evaluation is illustrated by the famous quote from *Alice in Wonderland.*

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where–," said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

The chart above describes the work breakdown for an evaluation project. Each step depicts an essential activity in the sequence. Each step necessitates a response which in its entirety may constitute the evaluation design proposal. Each of the steps is described briefly below, and assistance from the literature on evaluation should be sought for a total review.

**Evaluation Design and Purposes**

The evaluation design and the purposes of self-study raise questions as to what ends, outcomes, anticipated consequences, objectives, or goals the institution should pursue. The terms used above suggest some clarification of terminology is in order. As has been noted by a number of authorities, the variety of terms used in the "systems approach" concept leads to some ambiguity. The terms used in this document will be **mission** for the institution as

a whole, **goals and objectives** will be used in reference to programs or courses, and **functions** will be used to designate certain forms of the institutional mission such as teaching, research, or service, or community services, or continuing education, and the like.

The need for specification of purposes for self-study is also indicated by the fact that the institution is a complex entity, and many kinds of needs will come to the fore. Yet, an institution cannot undertake all aspects of institutional analysis at one time. Therefore, a systematic plan will have to be devised. This should ultimately result in an important institutional planning document.

The need for a design and set of purposes for the self-study is made more necessary since regional accreditation has abandoned a fixed and prescribed set of standards for institutional evaluation and accreditation. The original question concerning accreditation took the form that the institution should be (must be) doing this or that (prescribed) in relationship to this or that, and, if not, why not. The question as rephrased under the newer approach is "What and why is the institution doing this or that in relationship to some objective, and if so, so what?"

As mentioned earlier, the plan for evaluation or evaluation design may take a variety of forms. The process of planning recognizes that an institution's own designs for evaluation, particularly in complex institutions, may deal more specifically with certain areas or problems which are most pertinent to the institution at a given time of its current state of development.

It recognizes, too, that not all aspects of the institution may necessarily be expected to be reviewed simultaneously, though the concerns of the moment should be part of an overall plan of institutional evaluation which may cover a number of years. The assumption is necessarily made that the educational objectives sought by the institution in its self-study evaluation reflect major commitments of the institution rather than peripheral and limited objectives.

Finally, another reason for the development of a design is not only do institutions at the postsecondary level vary by type of institution, that is, community college, vocational-technical institute, university, liberal arts college, etc., but there is considerable variation within the types regarding size, nature of organization, variety of programs, activities, and functions. Internal institutional processes for quality control vary considerably not only between public and private institutions, but among public institutions from state to state. The position taken here is that the process of self-study should work to preserve these unique attributes insofar as possible.

**Delineation of Information Needs**

Attention is directed here to the data and information needed to respond to the questions raised in the accreditation evaluation design. Important types of information are the following: 1) historical, 2) decision precedents and rules, 3) statements of policies governing access to data, and, 4) evaluation assumptions as to sampling, treatment, measurement, and analysis: how much evidence should be developed or is sufficient.

**Plans for Obtaining Information**

This area refers to information sources, instrumentation, and description of data collection and conditions governing the collection of data. It refers to considerations that need to be made about instrument administration; the aggregation, storage, and retrieval of data; the quality control processes for maintaining the data; and the development of the institutional approach to data analysis.

**Plans for Providing Information**

This refers to the procedures agreed upon for the dissemination of reports, the types of reports to be written and to whom they should be directed.

**Overview of Data and Information Needs**[2]

Meaningful and consistent basic institutional data are essential to the institution for understanding the problems and operations of the institution and for day-to-day decisions. In probing into operations and examining the effects of actual or prospective decisions, basic data must be available to analyze the effectiveness of past operations and to predict the varying impacts of alternative future decisions.

Basic data refer to a meaningful method of recording the counts and tabulations and their combinations of various institutional phenomena and activities. Basic data on programs include the inventory of programs offered by the institution in instruction, research, and service; degrees; majors; course requirements; etc. Data on the curriculum need to be as systematically maintained as are the financial records.

Basic data also include student statistical data. Important are the enrollment data, enrollment in courses and majors, course changes, attrition, retention, grades awarded, degrees awarded, summaries of student aptitude tests, and personality information. How student statistical data are used will provide measures of input and output for the institution.

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[2]This treatment of basic institutional data is largely taken from Dressel and Associates, *Institutional Research in the University: A Handbook*, chapters four and eight.

Basic institutional data also include statistics regarding the faculty and instructional staff. Basic staff data yield measures of this resource for the functions of instruction, research, and public service and supporting services. Staff activities' data contribute to measures of work load and of the processes by which each of the functions is carried out. The activities and accomplishments of the faculty result in basic data which are indicative of product or outcome, particularly with respect to the functions of credit hours, degrees conferred upon students by level, and research. Basic data on staff should be collected in the appointment and budgeting processes. Staff counts made from the budget reveal in a general way the manner in which manpower resources are allocated to the primary functions of instruction, research, service, and to the supporting and auxiliary functions.

Basic data on administrative and support staff are as important as basic data on academic staff. The basic personnel data required by personnel policies, fringe benefits, and personnel development programs are important in institutional analysis.

Basic institutional data also include financial statistics of the institution. Accounting systems used by postsecondary institutions are increasingly being organized in ways which allow budget and expenditure data to reflect the application of funds to institutional functions. Budgeting, accounting, and auditing cannot be properly done unless the institution's resources and expenditures are a matter of record. Thus, although it might not be possible to measure whether or not the programs actually achieved a set of objectives broadly defined, it should be known what resource allocations were expended toward this or that purpose.

Further basic institutional data include an inventory of existing physical facilities and their utilization. Physical facilities constitute a central and expensive resource. The decision to commit funds for a new building is certainly a major one. Basic data on existing space are required for proper assignment, operation, and maintenance; for evaluation of space with regard to its use; and for decision making involving renovation or the planning of new construction as alternatives.

Basic institutional data are, or should be, collected in the normal process of operating an institution. There is, of course, a parallel between the information required in operations and that required for planning and management. Proper data collection requires carefully worked out definitions. Data collected must be internally consistent, comparable over time, available, verifiable, and understood.

An important need is the translation of complex data into useable information to serve the policy-making, planning, and governing processes of the institution. Unless properly used, data collection represents an exercise in futility.

## Types of Institutional Self-Studies

As mentioned earlier one of the necessities in the self-study process is to move away from the purely descriptive-historical approach, which may include merely a description of institutional functions and processes, the institutional environment, as well as the job descriptions of the major institutional officers. To assist in this reorientation the following types of self-studies are suggested (only the highlights are presented in this text) (Stufflebeam). The naming of the self-study types is only important to suggest some organizing concepts. Other nomenclature might prove equally useful.

**Context self-study evaluation** Context evaluation is of a most basic type, and its purpose is to provide a rationale for the determination of overall institutional goals. It serves planning decisions to determine overall goals, to monitor the system, and provide information on needed changes. It is mainly general. It provides both a basis for control within the system by continuous monitoring and a basis for changes by identifying unmet needs and unusual opportunities. It looks to emerging value orientation. It compares actual and intended performance and responds to the question: are goals being achieved as intended? For example, if the institution's budget is increased or decreased by 30%, what would result? Examples of studies of this type are those of Gross and Grambsh, *University Goals and Academic Power* and the number of studies utilizing the Institutional Goals Inventory of the Educational Testing Service.

**Input self-study evaluation** The purpose of input evaluation is to provide information for determining how to utilize resources to meet program objectives or objectives of units, subdivisions or parts of the overall institution. This is accomplished by identifying and assessing 1) relevant capabilities, 2) current strategies for achieving objectives of the units or programs, and 3) designs for implementing a selected or preferred strategy. The end product of input evaluation is an analysis of one or more of the procedural designs in terms of potential costs and benefits. Essentially, alternative designs are assessed concerning staffing, time, and budget requirements; potential procedural barriers, the consequences of not overcoming these and the costs of overcoming them. Relevance of the designs to objectives is considered and overall potential of the design to meet the objectives.

Input evaluation is diagnostic in detecting resource problems to be solved in implementing a selected strategy. Decisions based upon input evaluation usually result in the specification of procedures, materials, facilities, equipment, schedule, organizational schemes, staff requirements, and budgets. For example, a shift in design of the general education requirements from a distribution system to a block plan. Examples of studies focused on input and process types are those of Dressel, who has a long list of credits in this area. (Please see the bibliography at the end of this text).

**Process self-study evaluation** Process evaluation is necessary to provide information about how the implementation of plans and procedures is working. Process evaluation assesses the extent to which procedures are operating as intended. Process evaluation makes it possible to determine if actual procedure is discrepant from design. Process evaluation provides a basis for interpreting the reasons of achieving or failing to achieve objectives.

**Product self-study evaluation** Product self-study serves to judge and react to measures of performance of output on teams' objectives. It investigates the extent to which objectives have been or are being achieved. The general method of product evaluation includes devising operational definitions of objectives, measuring criteria associated with the objectives of the activities, comparing these measurements with predetermined absolute or relative standards, and making rational interpretations of the outcomes using recorded context, input and process information. Product evaluation applies to changes within the system, while context evaluation is relevant to the total system. One of the major studies for providing evaluative measures for the product or outcome dimensions is being formulated by NCHEMS at WICHE under the title, *Outcome Measures and Procedures Manual.* A somewhat different but similar approach is provided by the NACUBO, volumes I and II - The Planning Cycle: People, Process, Resources. (Please consult the bibliography for further information.)

It is possible to conceptualize the four types of self-study in a continuous evaluative cyclical model for the institution. The context evaluation mechanism delineates, obtains, and provides information to the central administration to enable it to make decisions either to change the system or to continue with present policies, procedures, and programs because they are serving important goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. If the context evaluation indicates no discrepancies between the intentions and actualities or between the possibilities, the administration might feel confident to continue with the status quo. However, if the context evaluation indicates a deficiency or identifies some unused opportunities for improvement, subsequent phases of the input cycle (input, process, or product) may be put into operation.

These types of self-study call attention to the major factors to be considered in the operations of the institution whether it be traditional or nontraditional in nature. These are an examination of institutional input, an examination of the environment and processes, and an examination of outputs. These factors are viewed in the context of an agreed-upon set of objectives which provide an indication of the level of quality at which the institution functions.

Typically institutions spend considerable time and effort at the input and process stage. Equal or greater emphasis needs to be directed at the output or outcome stage, that is, to see if those agreed-upon goals and objectives are actually being realized and at a level in accordance with predetermined plans.

Another formulation for institutional self-study and evaluation based upon the concept of planning has been set forth.[3] These are described in the following steps:

*The Needs-Assessment Stage:* a formal attempt to determine what should be accomplished by the institution. In this stage, goals are established and related to purpose and mission statements.

*The Planning Stage:* a rational systematic process of formulating alternatives to meet the needs. This stage identifies specific objectives necessary to accomplish the goals.

*The Execution Stage:* the performance of an alternative in progressing actions through the course of producing or achieving something. Execution is a way of organizing actions to be carried out as a result of a needs-assessment and the planning stage.

*The Recycling Stage:* a decision-making stage where the institution evaluates the attainment of the objectives and decides to either continue, terminate, or modify them.

Needs-assessment activity results in the determination of immediate, short-range and long-range goals and objectives. The limiting factor in this planning stage is the determination of consistency between the goals and objectives and the mission of the institution. The most general question posed would be is this response to this need consistent with the mission of this institution?

[3]Presented by Professor Walter Foley of the University of Iowa in staff discussions on the topic of self-study and evaluation.

Planning activity results in the formulation of a structure or structures that are designed to respond to a need through the specification of institutional resources, processes, and procedures. The planning activity results in a listing of the who, when, where, how, and for what cost in structuring to achieve objectives. Simply stated, the planning stage produces a workable plan.

Execution of the plan occurs when the evidence from the two previous stages was favorable enough to warrant progress to this point. Execution involves the actual occurrence of the processes and procedures in the expected sequence. This would be the "work-the-plan" portion of the old admonition "plan your work and work your plan."

The recycling stage is presented on the assumptions that most institutional activities and programs are not one-time events and that institutional activity is able to be conceptualized as occurring in cycles. The earlier-discussed purpose of continual attempts to improve performance is emphasized in this stage. The institutional actions of termination, modification, and continuation occur during this stage.

In theory at least, accredited institutions should carry through these stages as a matter of habit for established programs. Their self-study reports would be expected to focus on the discrepancies that occur between plans and practice when the plans were made long ago. Nevertheless, the self-study for all institutions represents an institution's efforts in self-evaluation. To be effective, self-studies address themselves to the relationship between what is being done and what was intended.

This discussion of self-study typologies and related matters has served to point up the complexity of the process as applied to educational institutions (Dressel, 1976). Yet, it is true that the process occurs by necessity in all institutions. Attention must be directed to the macroinstitutional level as well as to the microinstitutional level. The point is that a system must be fashioned that articulates the segments in some meaningful whole overtime.

While it is difficult in a brief paper to conceptualize the various evaluative models as applied to the institution, the following seven-step scheme summaries in a useful fashion and provides a methodological check for the various evaluative endeavors in the institution.

*Clarify goals and objectives.* What general goal must be reached? Define the end results desired. What cost-benefit results must be obtained? What results does the organization really need? What other goals do you want to obtain? Is the goal really understandable? Are the subgoals equally important?

*Estimate resources.* What resources presently exist: capital, manpower, equipment, facilities? What additional resources could be available? What efforts, programs, resources are already directed toward the goal (trends, current expenditures, manpower)? What will happen if nothing new is planned? What will it take to "bend" the trend line?

*Devise possible paths.* Sketch several routes to the goal. What's the shortest route? What's the surest way to the goal? Are there other similar routes or means? What new breakthrough could be used? Could ideas be combined?

*Predict potential problems.* What are the hurdles, problems, or detours between "now" and the goal for each possible path, in terms of manpower, money, time, resources, quality, output, relations with others (the public and other constituencies)? What are the risks, costs, and uncertainties of each method? What method is least workable, least feasible, probably most costly? What other problems are likely to occur if each means is followed?

*Select best path.* Narrow the "possible" list down by setting selection standards. Which paths satisfy resource limitations? Which paths meet the original goal? Which paths could be "sold"? Which paths are most feasible? Which paths are least costly? Which paths have other desirable side effects? Which paths seem to have the best cost-benefit ratio?

*Build total plan or idea to carry out goals.* Develop an adequate display or planning diagram of the selected plan. Show all critical elements. Include contingent or preventive actions.

*Critique and follow-up.* Compare plan to goals. Has backup action been provided? Have critical elements been provided for adequately? Has a monitoring or information system been provided? How will "on-target" or "behind plan" be shown?

## The Self-Study Process and Its Relationship to the Evaluation Guide for Institutional Assessment (*Dressell,* 1976, p. 61)

*Evaluation Guide for Institutional Assessment* relates the criteria, principles and expectations for accreditation by the Commission. The *Guide* is organized in five major areas which form significant dimensions of postsecondary institutions. It must be adapted to the type of institution for specific use: community college, liberal arts, vocational-technical institution, or university. Its general principles, however, are applicable to the range of institutions in the spectrum of postsecondary education.

The *Guide* is developed such that it may be utilized as a reference, a source of questions and hypotheses rather than contain the "pat" answer to a given problem. For the essence of the self-study approach is that the institution is able to demonstrate achievement of its goals and objectives at a sufficiently high level in accordance with its own evaluation design and through the evidence that it gathers to demonstrate such accomplishment.

Organizationally, the *Guide for Evaluation and Accreditation* encompasses goals and objectives, institutional structure, institutional processes, and long-range planning. As such, it is related to the evaluation methodology and types of self-study outlined earlier. The major components of the *Guide* and their relationship to the types of self-study are the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| What are the mission, goals, and objectives of the institution? | Context Self-Study |
| Evaluation of progress and achievement in relation to goals and objectives. | Process Self-Study<br>Output Self-Study |
| Educational and learning experiences. Are the programs of instruction and related activities adequate in kind and quality to meet institutional goals and objectives? | Process Self-Study<br>Output Self-Study |
| Are institutional resources—financial, learning resources, physical plant, and equipment—adequate in kind and quality to achieve the institutional purposes, goals, and program objectives? | Input Self-Study<br>Output Self-Study |
| The dynamics of the institution: organization, decision making, and planning. | Input Self-Study<br>Process Self-Study<br>Output Self-Study |

**Application of These Concepts to Traditional and Nontraditional Institutions**

It is the thesis of this presentation that the principles and concepts outlined in this statement, the *Handbook on Accreditation*, and the *Evaluation Guide for Institutional Assessment* apply equally to traditional and nontraditional

institutions. Unfortunately, in a number of respects an unhealthful dichotomy has arisen between the so-called traditional and nontraditional institutions. It is generally accepted that "traditional" institutions over the years have developed, to one degree of success or another, a relatively effective means for quality control through the establishment of certain mechanisms relating to faculty recruitment and promotion, faculty and administrative review of curriculum content, change of growth, the development of an advising system, and the awards system accorded to students as they progress through their degree or nondegree programs. The need here is to correct deficiencies in the credit and time-in-grade concept and devote greater attention to the needs of undergraduate students in accounting for learning and achievement.

Nontraditional institutions need to set in place a corresponding mechanism of "quality control" to ensure that appropriate means of accounting for student learning and institutional performance are available. In most instances this means that the nontraditional forms cannot simply borrow from the traditional because to one degree or another there is a strongly administrative orientation in operation and programming. Faculty are engaged in a variety of teaching-learning arrangements as well as students. Nontraditional institutions need to determine and set in place comparable measures of "output" to that achieved through the more traditional means. Traditional institutions developing additional systems need to determine where procedures in effect need to be augmented. It is most likely that additional resources (time, financial at a minimum) need to be committed.

It is maintained that through the development and application of adequate planning, management, and evaluation models as set forth in this paper a system of quality control can be developed or deficiencies corrected in existing mechanisms to demonstrate that the institution is achieving its goals and objectives at a satisfactory level and can be expected to continue to do so. In so providing, the institution demonstrates that it meets the definition of accreditation and is able to maintain quality in its operations.

## Report of the Self-Study

As discussed in this paper, self-study is a process which includes the organization of those activities of the institution that are directed toward evaluation. The self-study process culminates in a report which is usually designated simply the institutional self-study report. If individual committee subgroups are utilized, the separate reports should be brought together by the steering committee or some other responsible group for the preparation of a single, unified report. One person should oversee the final writing and editing of the report.

It may be desirable to prepare two documents: one, a detailed report for the limited audience which would be concerned with details; the other, a summary for wider distribution within the community or for groups external to the institution. Ideally, the self-study report will serve a number of uses at the institution and be a major resource and reference for the institution.

## Organization for Self-Study

The nature of the organization for self-study will vary according to the scope, nature, and emphasis of the evaluation design. It may also vary according to the size and complexity of the institution and whether the institution is a university, liberal arts college, community college, vocational-technical institution, or a special purpose institution. There is no one pattern appropriate for all institutions.

The self-study effort at the outset should have the support and commitment of the president or chief executive officer. This support is essential in the derivation of the self-study design and subsequent follow-up activities.

It may be useful to lodge responsibility in a centrally designated coordinating officer. This person may come from any part of the academic community. But responsibilities so assigned carry with them the accompanying authority for the execution of the task. Usually, this person will serve as chairman of the executive committee for self-study, sometimes called a steering committee.

Institutional committees should be composed in accordance with the design and purposes of the self-study. An institution-wide study, for example, may include representatives from all segments of the institution's community. Such a committee structure will of necessity be more elaborate than would be required in a more limited effort. If the study is to be an intensive effort to be completed within a limited and reasonable closely defined time-frame, the committees carrying on the activity may be *ad hoc*.

If the study is not comprehensive but is confined to certain areas of goals or activities, the committee structure may be more limited in scope. Nevertheless, it is always well to include, or at least provide, an opportunity for reactions from some who are not directly involved in the area under study in order that objectivity may be promoted. Also, those whose interests might be affected by the results of the study should in some way be involved.

As institutions move into more sophisticated self-study models, certain planning and evaluation teams may be established along with appropriate administrative assistance. They may serve as the central focus of responsibility to

formalize and articulate planning, management, and evaluation plans to the larger academic community. The committee structure may change over time. In any such framework it is important to maintain adequate communication channels from the smaller groups to the academic community at large. The maintenance of confidence and trust and an open, positive atmosphere is equally important in these processes. In keeping with the information presented in this paper, these suggestions are advisory; and institutions are encouraged to explore these approaches for application to their particular situation.

## Concluding Statement

An attempt has been made to develop a systematic framework for evaluation for accreditation, and view it in a continuous, cyclical process. It places an emphasis on goals and objectives. The endeavor here is to present a rather complete and comprehensive statement utilizing models and existing literature. Institutions may draw upon it to the extent that it may be useful. Institutions may not make use of all the suggestions, but they should try to reorient themselves to the suggested processes for accreditation purposes. Self-study should be an activity which is congruent with the time, energy, and resources available to the institution.

The self-study approach to institutional evaluation and accreditation should not be taken lightly. The process is time-consuming. As mentioned earlier, one of the important needs is to make more congruent institutional reporting processes and those of the Commission. Building an adequate institutional data and information base can be both expensive and frustrating. Another factor is the lack of adequate instruments and tools of analysis. At the present time the degree to which an evaluation design may be formulated to determine whether goals or objectives are being achieved may be less objective and more subjective, or nonempirical. Institutions will probably utilize techniques of evaluation more at the nonempirical and subjective end of the spectrum rather than the converse. Important elements of the evaluation design and the conclusions derived therefrom will be based upon deductive rather than inductive processes. Intuitive reasoning will still play an important role in assigning meaning to data.

The approach to institutional evaluation and accreditation through the self-study process casts a considerable burden upon the institution. This characteristic adds considerable weight to the opinion that the self-study approach should be conceived in a framework of maximum benefit to the institution. Thus, while the final end signified by the accreditation judgment is the assessment of worth and value about institutional performance in relation to goals and objectives and some notions about the institution's effectiveness as an added measure, the self-study process is to be accomplished in such a way as to

result in plans for institutional improvement and clarification or reformulation of institutional goals and objectives or those of its related parts or units.

Most of the methodologies suggested here emphasize the fact that self-study will cover a number of years and the qualities and characteristics of the institution will be dynamically related and portrayed. This is particularly evident in the Berquist and Shoemaker approach (see bibliography) in that the institution will carefully proceed through a set of well-conceived plans covering several phases in which each form the basis for moving to the next phase. The last stage, the evaluation phase, is the real focal point the institution needs to reach and ideally is the basis for the accreditation visit as well.

Institutions express some apprehension and unease in being scheduled for an evaluation at a particular time when they may be only at the beginning or middle of such a process of self-study covering a number of years. The question usually turns to the role of the on-site team and what expectations should be central to such a visit when the institution has embarked upon such a plan.

The relational factor to accreditation appears to be that the on-site visit can occur at any one of the stages or phases, hence the importance of the design and purpose of the evaluation and appropriate follow through by the on-site team. For the institution must be taken at its point of development and where this may be possible, prior adjustments made in evaluation cycles. In any event the on-site team must carefully fashion its on-site evaluation plan to the possibilities presented by the institution. The problem is not irreconcilable, and it would appear desirable to make adjustments in order that institutions might capitalize on this more fruitful approach. Indeed, this is what is occurring.

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